

EDWARD CARLINGTON HOUSE
68 Williams Street
PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND

HABS NO RI-19.

HABS
RI,
4-PROV,
25-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District of Rhode Island

Historic American Buildings Survey
Philip D. Greer, District Officer
14 College Street, Providence, R.I.

EDWARD CARRINGTON HOUSE
66 Williams Street
PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND

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RI,
4-PROV,
25-

Owner: Rhode Island School of Design

Date of Erection: About 1810-1813, 3rd story added

Architect: Probably John Holden Greene

Builder: John Corlis

Present Condition: Very good

Number of Stories: 3½ stories--originally 2½ stories

Materials of Construction: Brick structure with wood and brown-stone trim. Has a hipped roof with monitor, four exterior chimneys, two story porch.

Other Existing Records: Recorder of Deeds Office, Tax Assessors Plat and Records, City Hall, Providence, R. I.

Owners & Occupants of the Lots, Houses and Shops in the Town of Providence, R. I. in 1798 also 1759, by Henry R. Chace, printed in 1914.

The Rhode Island Guide, P.276, reference, printed in 1937.

Providence in Colonial Times, pages 368-369, references, G.S.Kimball.

Old Providence, P.37, references, Merchants National Bank, printed in 1918.

Other Existing Records:
(continued)

Early Homes of Rhode Island-Downing, references PP.269-350-365-367 371-382-383. P.384, photograph showing pedimented mantel and doorway and early nineteenth century Chinese wallpaper. Page 386, photograph showing mantel in southwest chamber.

Rhode Island Historical Society
R. I. Biographical Encyclopedia.
Reference P.81--life history of
Edward Carrington.

Providence Journal, April 12, 1936, photographs, exterior of house, also photographs showing the east side of the house, the small projecting portion being the office building in which the first Edward Carrington conducted his extensive snipping business in the East India trade. Another photograph showing the south parlor; fireplace with the portrait of Old General Carrington, the first Edward, built in the mantel. Another view of the south parlor, showing the peacock-studded old wallpaper. The paper is nearly as old as the house. It was specially manufactured in China for the house, (in the background) can be seen the north parlor, filled with Chinese objects.

Additional Data:

An interesting article on the life of Edward Carrington appeared in the Providence Journal, April 12, 1936, which reads in part as follows: "In profusion on the first floor are the Chinese objects of art, pieces of furniture, chests, lanterns, statuettes and porcelains from the Orient. Conspicuous among them are two figures of a noble Chinese gentleman and lady, richly garmented and standing more than three feet tall, in corner niches.

Additional Data:
(continued)

Of three rooms on the first floor believed papered with the original wallpaper, the south parlor is particularly noteworthy. It is a handsome affair, with paired peacocks predominating, but with other birds, butterflies and bamboo blossoms lending their color.

The large main block of the building is nearly square, with the ell, the office and numerous outbuildings added. The latter are grouped around a spacious courtyard in a manner almost unique in the North, making a spot full of atmosphere. The old archway leading to Power Street is still in its original spot. Dog trough and well head are other survivals.

The front door is a heavy one, but so well hung that it still swings easily and correctly. Conspicuous on it is a very large brass box lock, set upside down because it is of the wrong "hand", as it is called, for the door. It is a right-handed door, while the lock is for a left-handed one. The old locks could not be reversed in their interior mechanism as today's can and the keyhole often had to upside-down, as here.

In front of the stairs is an arch, built against the draughts which must have made old houses uncomfortable. The arch is closed with wood and glass. Above the transom is a leaded toplight of much charm and simplicity, while the treatment below is unusual. A panelled pilaster in the centre corresponds to the fluted column at each side against the wall and one half of the area under the arch is a door, the left being a solid panelling.

Additional Data:
(continued)

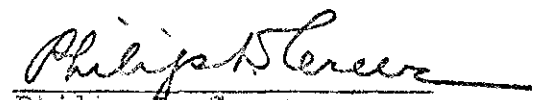
The uncommon arrangement of the pilaster instead of the opening was made necessary by the staircase which starts immediately behind the doorway.

In the ceiling is the original circular centre piece, around the hanger of the lamp, the latter having first hung in the hall of the Dorr House on Benefit Street. A century old clock and a fine card table are notable pieces of furniture here, while a Chinese dragon scowls in ancient fury from over the front door."

Transcript of Deeds
CityHall, Providence, R.I.

1. 1790 George Corlis devised the lot to his son, John Corlis.
2. John Corlis built the two story house before 1812.
3. October 14, 1812 John Corlis sold the land and buildings to Edward Carrington of Providence.
4. December 23, 1843 Edward Carrington died.
5. Edward Carrington, 2nd, received estate by inheritance.
6. On death of Edward Carrington, 2nd, property left to widow, Candace Crawford Dorr Carrington, a life interest.
7. On death of Candace Crawford Dorr Carrington, property left to daughter, Annie Ives Carrington, one-half interest and one-half interest to son, Edward Carrington, 3rd.
8. Annie Ives Carrington married Gamaliel L. Dwight, M.D., had one child, Margarette Lyman Dwight.
9. On death of Dr. Dwight, his widow, Annie Ives Carrington Dwight married William Ames.

10. On death of Annie Ives Carrington Dwight Ames, her husband William Ames is trustee under the 7th clause of her will.
11. May 17, 1909 Edward Carrington, 3rd, married Mrs. Mary Fessenden Sayles Washburn.
12. March 8, 1914 William Ames, trustee, died
13. 1914. No trustee from March 8, 1914 until December 3, 1935.
14. Theodore Francis Green, executor, under the will of Edward Carrington, 3rd, petitioned the Superior Court to be appointed as a trustee to act in the place and stead of William Ames (deceased).
15. December 30, 1935 Petition granted.
16. January 4, 1936 Petition recorded.
17. January 4, 1936. Theodore Francis Green of Providence under the Court Degree as Trustee, sold to Margarethe Lyman Dwight. Consideration \$1.00
18. April 12, 1937. Margarethe Lyman Dwight conveyed to the Rhode Island School of Design of Providence, lot of land, buildings and improvements known as the "Carrington Estate", as a permanent memorial of three generations of Edward Carringtons by the last member of the fourth generation to be known as The Carrington Homestead.


Philip O. Greer
District Officer for
Rhode Island.

EDWARD CARRINGTON HOUSE

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Address: 66 Williams Street, Providence, Providence
County, Rhode Island.

An addendum to
Carrington House
66 Williams Street
Providence, Rhode Island
in HABS Catalog (1941)

Present Owner: Washington Irving

Present Use: Following the present thorough restoration, the
house will be occupied as a dwelling by the
present owners.

Brief Statement
of Significance: This brick mansion was the home of General Edward
Carrington, a very successful merchant and trader
who assembled an outstanding collection of furnish-
ings, including many Chinese things, for this house
in the early 19th century.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Original and subsequent owners: The present house was begun for John Corlis c. 1811.
In 1812 Corlis sold a two-story brick house designed on a conservative 18th century plan with a central hall that was symmetrically flanked by two rooms on each side to Edward Carrington, who soon after enlarged and altered the house to its present form. The house remained in the Carrington family for four generations passing to Carrington's son Edward Carrington, his grandson Edward Carrington and finally his great-granddaughter Miss Margarethe L. Dwight. Miss Dwight gave the house and its contents to the Rhode Island School of Design in 1936 in order that the house with its collection of furnishings might be preserved as a museum. It was open as a house museum from 1936 until 1961 when it was returned to private ownership, being sold to the present owner, and the collections of furniture dispersed.
2. Date of erection: Begun c. 1811, completed as a two-story house 1812. Completed in its present form soon after 1812.

- Notes on original plans and
3. Notes on alterations and additions: The following notes on the history of the house, notes on original plans, alterations, and additions are transcribed from Antoinette F. Downing, "The Fate of Carrington House," Rhode Island History, vol. XXI, pp. 5-6.

"In 1812 Carrington purchased from John Corlis a two-story brick house on Williams Street, which was of conservative and typical eighteenth century plan, designed with a central hall and two symmetrically arranged rooms opening from either side (The deed of purchase dated Oct. 14, 1812, and deeds for additional land between Williams and Power streets, Carrington Papers.). Bills show that he was soon engaged in building operations which included mill construction and building a house on Westminster Street (at Snow Street) with his old friend Samuel Snow. He added a third story to his own house, finishing it with a handsome roof balustrade and built the unusual two-story portico on the south front. A detailed order to B. Sturgis for carving the eight Corinthian and eight Ionic capitals for the portico is also included in the papers. Carrington is credited with various interior changes, particularly in the hall where the front part is separated from the swiftly curving delicately detailed staircase by a double door (with one leaf fixed to conceal the stairs) above which is set a leaded glass fan light.

"The wallpaper in the parlor, decorated with floral designs and rare birds, peacocks, etc., one of the glories of the house was hand-painted in China for the room (Hugh Gourley III, 'Carrington House, Providence, Rhode Island,' Antiques, February, 1961, p. 183.).

...

"The beautiful wallpaper in the Carrington House is to be carefully restored. Other wallpapers in the house were printed by Joseph Dufour and Company of Paris in the second and third decades of the nineteenth century and are equally important. . . . The north drawing room of Carrington House is hung with Dufour's Indian Landscapes printed in 1815 while the set telling the story of Telemachus on the Island of Calypso and published in 1825 is hung in the library.

"Changes made in the house later, probably by the second Mr. Carrington, including installing the Greek Revival style marble mantelpieces (ca. 1845). This Mr. Carrington may also have been responsible for the niches in the north drawing room since Mr. Robert Paul Dart of the Oriental Department in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts thinks that the larger pair of mandarin figurines, for which the niches were designed, date from about 1840. Cuts in the floor boards here indicate that cupboards originally flanked the wide doorway leading from the north to the south drawing rooms. These were evidently removed to install the niches.

"At the northeast corner of the main house stands the little two-story brick building where General Carrington conducted some of his

voluminous business affairs. Like other such early office buildings it was originally set so that entrances and exits were separated from the main house in order to keep the main house free from business callers. . . ."

4. Sources of Information:

The Biographical Cyclopedica of Representative Men of Rhode Island (Providence, 1881), pp. 81-82.

John Hutchins Cady, The Civic and Architectural Development of Providence 1636-1950 (Providence, Rhode Island: The Book Shop, 1957).

John Hutchins Cady, HABS Inventory prepared November 19, 1956.

Antoinette F. Downing, Early Homes of Rhode Island (Richmond, Virginia: Garrett and Massie, 1937), pp. 350, 365, 367, 371, 382-387.

Antoinette F. Downing, "The Fate of Carrington House," Rhode Island History, vol. XXI, no. 1 (January, 1962), pp. 1-7. This article discusses the return of the house to private ownership in 1961, and the dispersal of the collection of furnishings.

Hugh Gourley III, "Carrington House, Providence, Rhode Island," Antiques, February, 1961.

Henry Russell Hitchcock, Jr., Rhode Island Architecture (Providence: Rhode Island Museum Press, 1939), p. 33, plate 26.

B. Historical Events Connected with the Structure:

Edward Carrington (1773-1843) was one of the great post-Revolutionary merchants, who amassed a great fortune in the China trade, and later in cotton manufacturing. He served as United States consul in Canton until the War of 1812, and in 1815 he established the firm of Edward Carrington and Company. Carrington was the chief promoter of the Blackstone Canal connecting Providence and Worcester, finished in 1828 just four years before the railway which caused its early failure was completed. Carrington was elected to the Rhode Island General Assembly several times, and was a major general of the state militia.

C. Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated:

A vast collection of Carrington business and family papers

was recently given to the Rhode Island Historical Society by the Carrington heirs. These are currently being studied by Jacques M. Downs, and it is intended that the papers will be published.

Prepared by Osmund R. Overby, Architect
National Park Service
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